

Describing Unserdeutsch (Rabaul Creole German): Methodological and empirical challenges

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Since 2014, an international team of researchers has been working on the documentation of Unserdeutsch, a still widely unknown and critically endangered German-based creole language of Papua New Guinea (cf. Maitz & Volker 2017, Götze et al. 2017, Lindenfelser & Maitz 2017). After extensive fieldwork data collection in the Pacific and the development of an annotated digital corpus, the next stage of the project is supposed to be the systematic corpus-based description of the phonological and grammatical structure of Unserdeutsch. In our paper we will address some of the major methodological and empirical challenges of this enterprise.

- (1) Creating an **orthography** for an unwritten contact language spoken by a multilingual community speaking different other languages with different orthographic systems;
- (2) Between the needs of the speech vs. the scientific community: the problem of addressing **different readership target groups** with different aims;
- (3) The centre and the periphery: The question of **exhaustivity** in terms of features as well as language variation along the creole continuum; the question of quantitative statements
- (4) Questions regarding the **empirical base**: The (pre-)selection of data with special attention to – sometimes contradicting – data from earlier fieldwork research.

References

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